

SHOOTING RANGE FACILITIES TASK FORCE
AUGUST MEETING NOTES
FWP HELENA OFFICE
10:00 AM – 4:00 PM, AUGUST 10, 2026

Facilitator: Deb O'Neill (FWP)

Notetaker: Natalie Schaus (FWP)

Task Force Members Present: Senator John Fuller (co-chair; Montana Senate), Representative Kerri Seekins-Crowe (co-chair; Montana House), Seth Berglee (Shield Arms), Senator Willis Curdy (Montana Senate), Mitch King (Montana Outdoor Legacy Foundation), Christie Knudsen (shooting association), Andy Larsson (Skinner Sights), Richard Roth (Governor's Office), and Liz Whiting (Parks and Outdoor Recreation Board)

Task Force Members Excused: Representative Courtenay Sprunger (Montana House), Mandy Rambo (Department of Commerce)

Invited FWP Staff: Jeff Hindoién (Legal), Sam Hoggatt (Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division), Renee Lemon (Parks and Outdoor Recreation Division), and Marty Tuttle (Legal)

Meeting Objective: Start forming task force recommendations.

Meeting Goals:

- 1) Share subcommittee summaries for a common understanding.
- 2) Discuss public input and other information gathered to date.

Monday August 10, 2026

10:00 a.m. Introduction—Deb O'Neill, FWP and Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe

- There is some misinformation going around and we don't necessarily need to fight it, but we should figure out what we need to do going forward

10:08 a.m. Complex Subcommittee Report Out—Mitch King

- Main ideas:
 - o 1. Put together a letter of interest
 - o 2. Focus on areas where we are interested in sending the proposals
- The LOI is based on the Wyoming LOI with a few tweaks to fit our situation
- The second document that Seth put together might have more information that could be put in an RFP in the future
- This could also reveal opportunities for regional facilities on land that isn't large enough for a complex
- There is no category for private property in the LOI and that could be limiting the opportunity
- We need to make sure we are in agreement when it comes to the LOI and what we are asking for.
- Sending out the LOI with gauge interest in a complex

- Both documents are great—one general and one plan
- Maybe add something to clarify that the land could be public, private, or a combination of the two
- It is not just about a complex or local shooting ranges. It is about both
- We need the second piece of saying that we are looking into local facilities too in order to prevent misinformation
- A lot of the smaller ranges don't have the funds for a 50-50 match. Maybe the legislature could put in a focus on funding 90-10 programs or opening PR funding (the committee will come back to this later)
- Could there be a separate LOI to see how we may approach the mid-level to small-level ranges?
- Until we see a proposal for a smaller range in an area that needs it, we may not know about it. Including it in the LOI may bring up more opportunities
- The committee voted to explore a large complex with additional support for smaller existing ranges. We should focus on the complex so it doesn't get confusing
- We should also come up with a plan to bolster local ranges that people rely on so that we don't lose the public's desire.
- Minor changes will be made to the LOI to make it more inclusive of private and smaller lands
- The committee will talk to SD and WY to ask for input

11:00 a.m. Lands Subcommittee Report Out—Seth Berglee

- The subcommittee looked at different land management agencies, locations, and how land transfers may happen
- Government land—DNRC requires the land board to make the decision, but we don't know how they value future money generation. They are looking towards tangible economic benefit, but the land board makes the final decision
- BLM transfers could be a good option
- FWP would be challenging because land is focused on conservation. Land could maybe be used, but not year-round
- City/ County Governments could be feasible
- Local or Regional Economic Development Organizations could be used
- US FWS/ PR, EDA, and conservation organizations could help to fund it, but probably not to find land

11:08 a.m. Funding Subcommittee Report Out—Rich Roth

- Colorado Cameo was a partnership involving private and public agencies
- South Dakota involved Pete Lien & Sons and other private and public funding.
- Wyoming was a partnership that involved private and public funding opportunities
- Potential funding for Montana could use PR, local economic development corporations, Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA), State Tourism Grants, National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), NRA Foundation, Conservation Organizations, County Infrastructure, Corporate Sponsorships, Community Foundations, and User Revenue (Long-Term Sustainability)
- There are some policies for State agencies surrounding sponsorships and those would have to be considered

11:25 a.m. Public Feedback Session

- Randall Knowles: Representing himself but is part of many organizations. In the past, the Friends of the NRA group usually tried to provide matching money for a range grant for FWP. In the past, the NRA director in Montana had a close relationship with FWP, but it fell apart. We have been trying to redevelop that relationship, but they haven't had much luck. They give away around \$400k per year, mostly for youth shooting programs, but also for ranges. The ranges know about it, but there needs to be someone at FWP who can work with them.

11:30 Lunch

12:25 p.m. Work Session

- Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe suggests that they ask for another interim session to work on this project
- Right now, there is no funding path for new ranges outside of a complex
- Focusing on a 2-pronged approach of a complex and working with local ranges that already exist could be a good focus
- In this last cycle, all applicants received funding and one only received partial funding due to maxing out the funds
- Can there be more funding for ranges? Can we ask for more funding to be appropriated for the local ranges?
- The funding could be opened up so that communities can clean up or build up existing ranges
- The \$400,000 is open to nonprofits and public entities
- Seth Berglee: Nonstructured range development should be included in the FWP grant program
- Willis Curdy: we could expand the grant program, but shooting ranges should look and see if their taxes have been reduced from a bill that was passed
- Main problems that we are seeing with the public
 - o Help smaller clubs with match
 - o How to help the nonstructured ranges
 - o How to help with increasing lease payments
- Legislative asks
 - o Work to set lease cost limits legislatively
 - o Sen. Curdy and Rep. Seekins-Crowe will come up with ideas for a bill to expand on Sen. Curdy's bill (SB 247) to expand funding
- More Discussion
 - o Some clubs operate on private land and pay property taxes
 - o If there are funds that DNRC has already, we should be using those to offset costs instead of taking other funds
 - o Raising fees won't cover the increase in lease costs
 - o It might be good to locate shooting areas on public land
 - o Forest Service is more limited, but FWP will try to track down the point person for Forest Service management

- We should have a roadmap that lays out a mechanism for public land to transfer land
- Seth Berglee moved to pursue setting up a road map to transfer federal state ownership to a designated shooting area
- Liz Whiting seconded the motion
- Funding
 - DNRC and the land board have to maximize the generation of revenue in a way that other agencies are not
 - Rich Roth will talk to the BLM about opportunities
 - Get Deb a list of the people that members are going to talk to
 - FWP should look into how they could help and what it would take for FWP to operate it (just as an option)
 - What would the budget be?
 - How much FTE would they need?
 - Where would the money come from?
 - Could it be free to the public?
 - Could FWP absorb a \$500k operating budget annually?
 - The committee's goal is still to provide a recommendation, and we don't need to give 5 options for areas yet
- Other Discussion
 - The Explore Act mandates the Forest Service and BLM to "assess and identify target shooting range locations and include at those ranges appropriate public safety designs and feature, such as berms, buffer distances, designated firing lines and optional shade structures, trash containers, restrooms and benches."

2:09 p.m. Break

2:25 p.m. Work Session Continued

- Next meeting: changing the date to the 14th at 9 a.m.
- Mitch will finalize the RFI (with help) so that it can be finalized at the September meeting and be sent out before the October meeting
- FWP will help to send it out to local government entities
- Commerce has more list serves, so they may be able to send it out

2:49 p.m. PR Subcommittee

- It would be good to have a list of potential people to reach out to
- The committee has \$33,000 remaining
- If we had some visuals drawn up for potential sponsorships, that may draw companies to donate
 - Billboards, sponsor wall, plaques, etc.
- Christie will look into grants for LE training facilities

3:02 p.m. Public Feedback Session

- Randall Knowles- If you are going to negotiate with DNRC for any existing properties, they have to have a lead mitigation project. There are some valid arguments as far as negotiating the land values down because it has been done and the committee may want to explore that
- Tim Jones- Representing Dillon Rifle and Pistol club. Friends of the NRA grant tops the list for any club to apply for a grant. Their grant proposal was not rewarded funds and most of the funding went to youth development programs, not range improvements. Their FWP grant was awarded, but the sourcing and communication are issues with the FWP grant. In terms of cost, they don't have the resources to do a large grant application. Range development grants are more challenging than you would think.

3:08 p.m. Final Comments and Next Steps

- PR subcommittee will work on a game plan to figure out who to reach out to, how to get the word out, etc.
- RFI—the sub committees will finalize it and get it ready to send out
- What would it look like for grants?
 - o Look into grants related to education and enforcement

3:12 p.m. Adjourn